



Stop Shell Hell in Mayo

Shell Oil & corruption in Ireland

A Socialist Worker pamphlet

Price €1

Stop Shell Hell in Mayo

Five Rossport men have been jailed because the Irish state has become a mouthpiece for the oil and gas companies. Micheal O Sighin, Willie Corduff, Phillip McGrath, Vincent McGrath and Brendan Philbin have displayed exemplary courage and determination.

Their campaign has inspired tens of thousands of people across the country (and indeed the world) who are angry at the way the Irish State has put Shell's profits before these people's rights. Thousands have marched, walked out of work in protest and blockaded Shell and Statoil stations in support of the jailed five. Such fantastic displays of solidarity, mass civil disobedience and mass protests are what can win this campaign.

Recently the people of Bolivia took over their capital city, shut down the transport networks and overthrew their government in protest at the selling off of Bolivia's natural resources to foreign-owned multinationals. The Nigerian government hanged 9 environmental activists in 1995 for speaking out against exploitation by Shell and the Nigerian government. The tribunal which convicted the men was part of a joint effort by the government and Shell to suppress a growing movement among the Ogoni people to demand their rights and an end to the destruction of their land by Shell's pipelines. Since then there have been ongoing protests and workers strikes against Shell in Nigeria. Across the world it's the same. Politicians put corporate profits before the lives of ordinary people. It is the resistance of ordinary people like the Bolivians, the Ogoni people and the Rossport Five that can defeat the corporate giants.

Shell is endangering the safety of people to boost their profits. By processing the gas inshore, Shell will save €360 million in capital costs and reduce its operating costs by 40 percent a year. The planning inspector of An Bord Pleanála was not impressed, claiming that, 'the choice of preferred option is primarily based upon the cost difference between it and other offshore options... rather than on environmental or technical constraints'.

Shell is being driven by the desperate logic of capitalist competition. More than a decade ago, they discovered that their annual rate of return on investment averaged just 7.9 percent. At the time the industry average was 9.3 percent. Fearing huge losses in the speculative oil markets, Shell imposed high targets on its different divisions. But like the old command economies of the Soviet Union, this only led local managers to over-state their oil reserves. Since then it has been discovered that it fraudulently overstated about 20 percent of its reserves.

The global oil and gas giant is now desperate and this is why they have responded with a dangerous new method of gas processing. Erris is being used as an experiment zone to pioneer inshore processing. The company thought that with compliant politicians in their pocket, they could get away with inflicting it on a comparatively isolated community. They reckoned, however without the indomitable spirit of a people who have resisted overlords since the days of Michael Davitt.

People Power Will Win

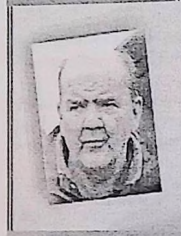
Three thousand people marched in Belmullet to demand the release of the Rossport Five. But two Mayomen were conspicuous by their absence - Pat Rabbitt, the leader of the Labour Party and Enda Kenny, the leader of Fine Gael. Both have run a mile from the whole issue. The leaders of the 'alternative' government do not want to upset the corporations. They want to be the B team in the puppet play. The battle to defeat Shell therefore depends of the full use of people power.

Despite all the doomsayers, huge demonstrations have a powerful effect. The demonstrations in Belmullet and Castlebar, for example, have helped to win the whole of Mayo to the campaign. The same needs to be repeated in Dublin and throughout the country. The stakes are enormously high. Defeating this government will require an escalation to the level of mass civil disobedience. This is our task.



Brendan Philbin

"It is a poor state of affairs when the judiciary is working hand in hand to facilitate a private company over the rights of Irish men and women".



Micheál Ó Seighin

"What Shell is proposing is technically and materially wrong, in breach of EU regulations and of Shell's normal standards regarding pipelines. It is also not under the control of the energy regulator or the health and safety authority."



Philip McGrath

"I am just seeking to protect my lands. The pipeline is just 70 metres from my house and I am living in fear for my safety".



Vincent McGrath

"My house is only 20 metres from this unprecedented pipeline. My main concern is that no State body is taking responsibility for my safety and I am left with Shell, a private company."



Willie Corduff

A father of six, "I am prepared to go to prison to get my rights, like McBrearty."

The Rossport Five

We are in jail, as a last resort, to protect ourselves and our families, our neighbours and our area, from potential destruction by gas pipeline rupture. That remains our position, our one and only requirement: no-one can do less.

Pipelines rupture: no pipeline engineer intends this to happen but it does, with sickening frequency. The outlandish pipeline here proposed, to be forced in close proximity past our houses, is the stuff of nightmares. What they do to us, they will do to you.

The solution we are proposing, i.e. a shallow offshore platform, is the only positive one. It means yes to gas, yes to jobs, but yes to health and safety.

Statement Issued By The Five Jailed Mayo Men And Their Families on 30th June 2005

The imprisoned five and their families request the developers, authorities, and the state, to accommodate the following:

1. Stop the illegal development in Rossport.
2. Cease all current operations in Erris, both onshore and offshore, including the refinery in Ballinaboy, and pipeline works in Aughooose, Rossport and Glengad.
3. Withdraw all threat of imprisonment and financial ruin over the people of North Mayo, and renegotiate the original gas deal, for the Irish people.

DANGER: Gas pipeline saves profits by risking lives

Context

The Corrib Gas Field is being developed by three multinational companies SHELL 45%, STATOIL 36.5%, MARATHON 18.5%, headed by Shell. They intend to refine the gas in a formerly Coillte-owned 165 hectare forest which is 9 km inland. Shell intend to run the Upstream (offshore) pipeline through this 9 km stretch of land alongside (and under) the public road and in close proximity to houses. Shell maintains that there is nothing exceptional about this pipeline and that there are gas pipelines operating safely in cities and towns in Ireland. SHELLTO SEA was set up to highlight the risks posed by Shell's high-pressure gas pipeline coming in from the Corrib Field which is being forced through the village of Rosport in North Mayo and will pass close to people's homes. The campaign is calling for the gas to be processed offshore. SHELL-STATOIL will not process the gas at sea because it will cost them too much money and they say that they have to take account of the safety of the rig workers.

Pipeline

High pressure Bord Gais transmission pipelines in Ireland must adhere to 'sales gas' standards i.e. cleaned, odourised gas with pressure less than 80 bar and a mandatory separation distance of 70 metres from dwellings to conform with the NSAI code of practice. Maximum pressure in cities/towns is 4 bar. A bar is 14.5 pounds of pressure per square inch. The tyre-pressure of a normal car is about 2 bars.

The SHELL-STATOIL pipeline is very different from Bord Gais pipelines because this type of pipeline, known as an upstream pipeline, has no precedent anywhere in Ireland or indeed in Europe. You could say that it is an experiment.

- It is of an astounding 345 bar pressure. (i.e. c. 5,000 psi, a car tyre is 2 psi)
- It will come ashore at Dooncarton where there were over 40 separate landslides
- It will be 'raw' (untreated) corrosive gas subject to massive slug build-ups over its 92 km length
- It will have several high-risk 90 degree angles over its 9 km on shore length
- It will be unodorised, so leaks cannot be detected
- It will run alongside the public road for much of its length
- It will not be possible to maintain even a 70m separation from houses and stay safely clear of the loose clay cliff face along the shore of the beautiful Sluth Fada Conn Estuary SAC.

Pipeline accidents are uncommon but do occur. In 2004 twenty-one people died in a gas pipeline explosion in Ghislenghien in Belgium and in August 2000, twelve people died in New Mexico when an underground natural gas pipeline ruptured.

Umbilical

In the same trench, to operate the wells remotely there will be:-

- An electric power supply!!!
- An hydraulic fluid supply of 210 bar
- High pressure hydraulic fluid supply of 610 bar
- Methanol injection supply

This amounts to some cocktail through notoriously unstable ground. Should there be a rupture of this high-risk pipeline, the consequences for man and the environment would be unquantifiable and, unbelievably, our Government is carrying the responsibility for this unprecedented high-risk, high-pressure Shell pipeline. Why?

Standards

There is no international standard or code of practice to cover this. The NSAI Code of Practice covers only cleaned gas in pipelines up to 100 bar pressure. If one extends their separation distance graph out to cover the pressure in Shell's pipeline, one would come up with a mandatory distance of 260 metres (for cleaned, odourised gas).

The Deal

Corrib Gas, worth at a conservative estimate, six billion euro, was given away by the Government without any retention of state interest. The private multi-national oil companies will pay no royalties and with tax write-offs going back 25 years, they will pay no tax to this State. Any gas sold to the Government will be bought at commercial rates. The refinery will be situated in a formerly Coillte-owned site of 156 hectares. The land was never offered for sale on the open market. Thanks to Ray Burke, Bobby Molloy and Bertie Aherm the multi-national oil companies own 100% of our natural resources. Norway owns 70.5% of STATOIL so we have the crazy situation where the people of Norway will own over 25% of the gas passing through the high-pressure pipeline in Rosspoint while the people of Ireland (i. e. you and me) will get nothing.

Mayo-Galway Pipeline

In order to bring the gas to market, Bord Gais will build a 150 km pipeline from the refinery site to the National Gas Grid at Craughwell in Galway. Bord Gais has refused to disclose the cost of this pipeline. Only 27% of the Corrib Gas reserve will be sold to Bord Gais. The remaining 63% will be sold to private customers in competition with Bord Gais but through Bord Gais pipelines. Why is Bord Gais willing to risk their safe record of 30 years by connecting up to this dangerous refinery in a forested area and transport gas to market for Shell?

Peat Trafficking

In order to build the refinery, 450,000 tons of peat has to be removed from the refinery site. Bord na Mona has undertaken to do this and deposit the peat 13 km away on their lands. Mayo Co.Co. 'upgraded' a bog road through special areas of conservation to enable 800 HGV's per day for min. 6 months to transport the peat. In the first week of operation, three trucks carrying this saturated peat went off the road. Work has been suspended to strengthen the supposedly well-prepared road.

Emissions

The proposed refinery site is surrounded by a cluster of SAC's/SPA's. The National Parks and Wildlife Service which is entrusted with the protection of such sites has failed miserably in its duty under EU law. Emissions of 13 million cu. mts. per day at an average temperature of 500 degrees centigrade will rise from this refinery and will be brought down on these protected sites through the heavy rainfall in the area. There will be 238,080 kg. of pure gas released into the atmosphere each year. This, together with the temperature of the emissions will result in formaldehyde and will rain down on villages and protected areas downwind of this refinery. There will be a 24 hr. 365 day/year risk of vapour cloud explosions through the ignition of a gas cloud drifting downwind.

Protected Areas

Two salmonid rivers are in the catchment of this site. The site drains through one of those rivers into Carrowmore Lake SAC (drinking water for 10,000 people). The ABP Inspector warned that through siltation, the lake could turn into a giant settlement pond from which it might never recover. Also, remaining peat in the refinery site is to be 'stabilized' by mixing in 36,000 tons of dry cement, with permission to repeat the procedure if the desired result is not achieved - pollutants, including carcinogens, will end up in Carrowmore Lake through runoff. Since the arrival of Shell at this site, the Ballinaboy River, which was Class A (i.e. pristine) for the previous 10 years, is now highly polluted. Angling has been suspended for the last two seasons on Carrowmore Lake SAC, a very important fishing resource for the area as it is now classed as 'highly eutrophic'.

Safety

The National Authority for Occupational Safety and Health is the Competent Authority for sites falling under the Seveso Directive. The refinery site comes under this Directive because of the massive amounts of highly dangerous substances to be stored on site. The H.S.A. failed to take into account several scenarios under this Directive as required under EU law. They stated in their report that the worst possible consequences would

be caused by a full-bore rupture at the high-pressure import gas pipeline and that the fatal effects from a jet fire could extend to 527 mts. Despite this, residents are expected to live and work within 70 mts. of this pipeline! Do we need another 'Whiddy Island'?

Propane Gas

There will be a requirement for massive amounts of propane gas to be stored on site for a future gigantic refrigeration plant required as field pressure drops. Propane gas is extremely flammable with a flashpoint of 1 degree. It is a violation of the Seveso Directive not to include this in the inventory.

Waste Oil Condensate

Condensate will be recovered from the gas during the refining process. 1,089 tonnes of condensate will be stored on site and 3,604 tonnes will be incinerated annually for fuel use against all best international practice. There is an abundance of natural gas available for fuel. By unnecessarily storing condensate on site, and by emitting pollutants onto designated sites, EU law is being violated twice.

Methanol

The hydrate inhibitor, Methanol is to be used. Methanol is highly flammable with a flashpoint of 10 degrees. It is extremely toxic and in incidence of small contamination causes blindness. Glycol is the industry preferred alternative and is much safer but is more expensive to use. A Massive 3,629 tonnes of methanol will be stored on site in 5 tanks each 35ft. high and 30ft. diameter with an annual loss to the environment of 1,825 tonnes. The H.S.A. has stated in their report that 'Uncontrolled release of each of these materials (condensate and methanol) into the environment, at sufficiently high volumes, is likely to result in a major accident to the environment'.

Emergency Services

One wonders what would happen should HGV's carrying propane gas or methanol go off the road as happened three trucks in one week carrying peat? The emergency services are 80 km away. The transportation of dangerous substances by road does not come under the remit of the H.S.A. nor does the Upstream pipeline save for the 5m stretch within the refinery site thus protecting Shell personnel. No Authority or Agency is responsible for the health and safety of the public from the remaining 9 km of this pipeline. When the ABP Inspector requested that the Board seek advice from the H.S.A. on the matter, the Board, incredibly, by specific direction, refused to grant his request. The Board then granted permission for the refinery and passed the 'poisoned chalice' on to the EPA whose remit covers only emissions.

High Court Hearings

People living along the route of this pipeline are greatly concerned about their safety and health. They requested to see the risk assessment upon which the Minister based his 'consent' for this project, before admitting Shell personnel onto their lands. This was refused. They were hauled by Shell before the President of the High Court for an injunction. At each of the four different sittings of the High Court, they requested to see the 'consent' and risk assessment. The President of the High Court granted Shell the injunction without allowing them the right to view the documents. They were subsequently denied a copy of the judgement. Is this justice?

[The risk assessment on the refinery should have been carried out at the request of the H.S.A. It was commissioned by Shell - as was the risk assessment on the notorious Upstream pipeline.]

Potential Disaster

Should there be a rupture of this pipeline, the electric power supply will be severed. There is then total reliance on an automatic shut-down facility. If this fails, (and 30% of pipeline failures are due to faulty equipment), the operator will have lost control of the wells. It is a frightening scenario. Is there is a resolution to protect the environment in this sensitive location; to safeguard the health and safety of the public and to relieve all our 'protective agencies' from the shameful abdication of their responsibilities under EU law? Yes, - clean the gas offshore and bring it on land - safely.

Factfile: Objections to the Shell-Statoil pipeline

Shell's pipeline through Rossport is extraordinarily dangerous:

- as acknowledged by Minister Dempsey in a written Dail reply to Deputy Michael Ring, it is unparalleled not only within Ireland but within Europe or elsewhere;
- it will have a rated pressure of 345 Bar (5,000 lb/sq/in) and a normal working pressure of 150 Bar in contrast to Bord Gais Eireann maximum norms of 70 Bar (1,000 lb/sq/in) City pipelines have 4 Bar max. home lines 0.2 Bar;
- these dangers will be compounded enormously because it will transport raw gas mixed with condensate oil and water which will frequently form large obstructive 'slugs';
- these 'slugs' will build up over the 92km distance from the gasfield and may attain unmanageable proportions;
- this 92 km tie-back distance for raw gas is at the very limit of off-shore tie-back technology so it is essentially experimental and risk prone;
- frequent ramping up and down (i.e. stop-start) of supply, which three-way consortium ownership requires, will greatly increase the tendency for obstructive 'slugs' to form;
- normal practice is to refine raw gas close to the gasfield, after which it can be transported for unlimited distances at much reduced pressures and without any formation of 'slugs'.

Bullying and intimidation have been practised by Shell and the Dept from the outset:

- while taking great pains to appear outwardly helpful, a very ugly side has been shown whenever land-owners did not readily comply with their demands;
- notice to apply for Compulsory Acquisition Orders was served in the week before Christmas (17th Dec.) 2001 showing extreme disregard for decency and propriety;
- of the 35 plot holders involved none agreed to Shell's demands prior to its application for Compulsory Acquisition Orders, the seven who are still holding out account for 50% of the land required

Shell attempts to make money and costs the central issue rather than local residents health and safety issues:

- Shell's parent company recently announced annual profits equivalent to Euro18 billion, which represents Euro50 million per day or Euro2 million per hour!;
- to date Shell has only ever revealed costs of this project, never the value of the gas reserves which at current prices would be in excess of \$5 billion*;
- this potential revenue would be free of royalties or shared state ownership, and all of its total projected investment of E800 million would be off-set against its tax liability;
- clearly this asset, which was owned by the Irish people until recently, affords Shell ample scope for safe development in respect to both people and environment – that is, off-shore.
- Gas has an equivalency of 150 million barrels of oil to one trillion standard cu. ft. of gas. So, at a conservative \$40 per barrel for oil, 0.9 trillion standard cu. ft. of gas is valued in excess of \$5 billion.

Gas Lads: The politicians who sold Ireland's family silver in the great oil and gas give-away

"No other country in the world has given such favourable terms as Ireland."

Mike Cunningham, a former director of Statoil Exploration (Ireland)

The Puppet state

The saga of Ireland's subservience to the energy corporations began in the late 1960s when Marathon Oil was granted a licence that effectively gave it control of the south coast of Ireland for the nominal sum of just €635. It then went on to discover large quantities of natural gas off the Kinsale Head.

Shell, the principal company involved in the Corrib Gas Field, spent \$28 million and employed 120 lobbyists between 1998 and 2003 to promote its interests with the US federal government while Marathon has spent €29.1 million. At least in the US, one can track these activities whereas in Ireland lobbying takes a far less open form. Marathon Oil, however, has contributed to Fianna Fail and Enterprise Oil has hosted the Fianna Fail fund raising event at the Galway races.

These oil companies control vast resources, technology and expertise and their close ties to the power of the US state, means that they have leverage over Irish politicians. That is the only plausible explanation why the Irish state has gone to extraordinary lengths to look after their interests in Mayo. The state owned forestry company, Coillte, sold over 400 acres to the consortium, as a site for the oil refinery. Bord Gais, the state owned gas company, is building a special extension to the national grid at a cost of €200 million to get gas from the Corrib field. The Taoiseach, Bertie Ahern, held a special meeting with the President of Shell to encourage the company to re-apply when its first planning application was rejected. A government Minister also travelled to the area to mobilise support for the project. Special legislation was put in place to impose compulsory acquisition of land for the pipeline and, in effect, the project was split so that planning permission was only required for the refinery rather than the pipeline. Even more bizarrely, the 'independent' consultancy firm that was hired to do a quantified risk assessment of the pipeline was part owned by Shell.

Behind all the bureaucratic manoeuvring is a strategy to give the Petroleum Affairs Division (PAD) a free hand. This is a unit inside the Department of Marine and Natural Resources which has close ties to the energy corporations. The former Statoil executive, Mike Cunningham, who has joined the campaign for the Rosport Five says that no press release was issued by the PAD until it was first shown to the oil and gas companies. Behind the scenes Ahern has manoeuvred to hand over Ireland's natural resources to the corporations. If this were Bolivia, he would have been thrown out of office by now. Hopefully the Bolivian spirit is coming to Mayo.

Ireland and BIG OIL - A history of subservience

(Source: Magill Magazine 2002)

Ireland, by conservative estimates, contains thousands of oil- and gas-bearing zones in her 650,000 square kilometres of water. In recent years, the Marathon Oil company has discovered large quantities of natural gas in the Celtic Sea and, more recently, the Corrib North gas fields off the shores of North Mayo is valued at over €5 Billion.

The discovery of massive natural resources of gas within our territorial waters should be a godsend: something that will ensure our fiscal security, creating jobs and revenue for the foreseeable future. Such resources have been a guarantee of success for countries like Norway and those of the Middle East, which, before the discovery of oil, were bereft of any real income-generating industries. Now, like them, we have won the oil and gas lottery - only to find we've thrown away the winning ticket: a loss of unimaginable proportions to Ireland for generations to come.

The problem stems from the fact that since the first offshore exploration licences were granted by the Irish government in the late 1960s, the balance of power has been with the oil companies. Marathon Oil (USA) was granted a licence that effectively gave it control of the entire south coast of Ireland for the princely sum of £500 [€635]. Marathon went on to discover large quantities of natural gas in the Celtic.

There should have been a lesson learned there. However, in 1992, long after the benefits of the North Sea finds had been realised, Ireland introduced an oil tax regime of 25 per cent - the lowest in the world. Norway's oil tax is currently 78 per cent.

Ireland offered the oil companies a further benefit, in that all costs could be written off against this levy. In a bizarre and inexplicable decision, the government of the day also agreed to abolish royalties and all other production-related levies, without any commitment from the oil companies to offset these unique benefits by guaranteeing a single Irish job, or indeed any agreement to use Irish goods or services.

The oil companies secured a deal with the Irish government which will only benefit the oil companies. The sale of our vital national resources in this way means that Ireland cannot benefit in terms of economic spin-

offs through the provision of services, manufacturing, ship and rig construction, infrastructure and development of port services, refineries, petrochemical industries, or the thousands of on- and offshore jobs and ancillary services needed to support the oil industry.

The Norwegian experience

Norway, only a century ago, was one of Europe's poorest nations, until it experienced a reversal of fortune with the discovery of oil in the North Sea in the 1970s. Taking full advantage of its new-found status, the Norwegians set about constructing some of the largest and most advanced offshore production facilities in the world: virtual floating cities, designed to withstand waves 30 metres high, and even hurricanes.

By the mid-90s the cost of this infrastructure was in the region of \$100bn, or \$23,000 per head for each and every Norwegian citizen. The pay-off, however, has been substantial, and Norway is now the second largest exporter of crude oil worldwide, after Saudi Arabia. The Norwegian continental shelf will continue to be a major source of natural gas for the next 100 years, ensuring the long-term economic strength of the country.

Ireland, too, could have been a major player on the world's stage. Instead, it chose to throw away the best opportunity we have ever had. The state sold the family silver. After confirming the commerciality of the Corrib North find, Enterprise Oil lobbied the government for a reduction of the already small, by industry standards, tax rate to 12.5 per cent. The oil industry in Ireland, the Irish Offshore Operators Association [the IOOA], then proposed that a \$5 subsidy be paid by the state for any oil found in Irish waters, a proposal which smacks of the deal done with the American Indians to buy New York for a handful of beads and a few dollars.

Informed industry sources suggest that the oil companies view the west coast of Scotland as being the main base of operations for the Atlantic Margin, described as the new oil and gas frontier. The North Sea oil and gas fields, they believe, have a finite life span, which is expected to stretch into the latter part of this century. To base their operations in Scotland makes sound economic sense for the oil companies which have built up the Scottish infrastructure for the past 25 years, where the Atlantic Margin stretches from west of the Shetlands, west of Scotland, down as far as the western seaboard of Ireland.

With such a potentially lucrative new source of gas and oil in Irish waters, the Irish government has been remiss in not securing a deal that would ensure similar structures and benefits were set up here as part of the licence requirements. Industry experts say our politicians and civil servants must be held accountable, and explain their actions in exposing Ireland to such losses and in failing to protect our interests. The initial tax deal was offered as 'an incentive' to encourage oil and gas exploration in Ireland, but since 1992 only a small number of wells have been drilled, despite the evident potential of viable finds. One industry source explained: 'The vast bulk of licences and drilling options or leases are so-called 'frontier licences' that the oil companies can sit on for up to 20 years. Technology has moved on rapidly, and deep-water production techniques have already been developed for drilling the deep waters of the western Atlantic, but the proper exploitation of our natural resources had been delayed until the oil companies decided when to drill and produce: not to fulfil our needs for oil and gas but their own.' Other experts within the industry allege that many claims of 'dry holes' drilled by the oil companies in the past were in fact positive finds, held over for a later day.

In contrast to standard operating procedures elsewhere in the world, Ireland has no government officials based on oil rigs operating in Irish waters. Instead, they visit the rigs from time to time, and by appointment. The state relies on the information supplied to it by the oil companies as to the viability of each site.

Justin Keating: protecting Ireland's interests

In the early days, the then Energy Minister Justin Keating introduced oil and gas exploration taxation, which would protect Ireland's interests in the event of any commercially viable finds. The tax then was levied at 50 per cent, and gave the state a right to an automatic 50 per cent shareholding in the find, together with royalties in the region of six to seven per cent. There was also a clearly defined understanding that Ireland would benefit from the spin-off industries associated with any such find.

Following an international slowdown in oil exploration and production, in 1985 Labour's Dick Spring modified Keating's well-thought-out 1975 agreement to allow for a sliding scale of royalties and state participation, while continuing to protect Ireland's interests.

The Ray Burke intervention

In a move yet to be adequately explained, former Fianna Fail Minister Ray Burke met with the oil companies against the advice of one of the most senior advisors in his department. He subsequently reversed the policies of both Justin Keating and Dick Spring by amending their agreements, abandoning Ireland's right to a 50 per cent stake in any commercially successful find.

In what could only be described as yet a further inexplicable move by any government or business concern, not alone did he give away our right to a stake in our own natural resources, but he abolished royalties, while at the same time introducing a scheme which would allow massive write-offs for the oil companies.

At the time of the original agreements secured by Keating and Spring, expert opinion took into account the long-term benefits that could accrue to Ireland, and the agreements reflected this; they were designed to protect Ireland's interests. But, without any visible benefits in return, these interests were given away by Ray Burke's deal. On this subject Des Geraghty remarked: 'I believe that from the start the concessions that were given were unbelievable. There were no jobs in it. There was very little for the Irish economy and we are now suffering the consequences of a very bad policy which former minister Ray Burke has to answer for.'

'Frontier licences' were introduced, allowing the oil companies to hold a licence for up to 20 years on a drilling location option. This, together with 100 per cent write-offs, left the door wide open for Ireland, already plundered, to be raped of its resources.

The Bertie Ahern connection

Bertie Ahern was described by Charlie Haughey as the most cunning and devious of them all. He has certainly worked tirelessly behind the scenes to facilitate Shell.

However, even more crucial concessions came in 1992 when Bertie Ahern was Minister for Finance. In the Finance Act of that year, the corporation tax rate on oil and gas production was reduced to 25 percent, the lowest in the world. The companies were also allowed to write off all costs going back for 25 years. (By way of contrast, tax on oil profits in Norway was set at 78 percent.)

Expert speaks out

Mike Cunningham is a former director of Statoil Exploration (Ireland) Ltd. Cunningham has wide experience in offshore exploration and production and, in particular, the acreage off the western coast of Ireland. A former chairman of the IOOA's Environmental Committee and former chair of its Labour Relations Committee, Cunningham, now an independent oil and gas consultant, said: No other country in the world has given such favourable terms as Ireland. Following the 1992 concessions when royalties were abolished and oil and gas companies were given a 100 per cent write-off against development and recovery costs, the tax rate was reduced from 35 per cent to 25 per cent. Now, once production starts from the Corrib field, the oil companies will be able to write off all costs going back 25 years. These are the same companies that operate elsewhere in the world under far more stringent regulations. In the Faroe Islands, for example, no company can operate without agreeing to a minimum government take of 55 per cent by way of taxes and royalties. The oil companies are also obliged to give a commitment to develop a sea port in the area, and these are the same companies operating off the west of Ireland. In Norway, the government take was up to 79 per cent on some of the fields, and that compares to zero per cent here. The Norwegians have also benefited with the development of infrastructure for their ports and other services. Cunningham found it 'most unusual' that the Taoiseach made the announcement of a joint venture to build the pipeline even before there had been a declaration that the Corrib was commercially viable.

In 1995, Michael Lowry issued many of the licences to the various interested parties, Enterprise Oil among others. Enterprise Oil was bought over by Shell in 2002. Enterprise Oil holds the bulk of licences in Irish

waters, including the much-lauded Corrib North gas field, in which it has a 45 per cent stake. Statoil Exploration (Ireland), together with Marathon International Hibernia Ltd, hold the remaining shares. Enterprise Energy Ireland Ltd, the operating company for the project, is headed up by Enterprise Oil personnel, and is now known as Enterprise Fuinneamh Eireann.

The Corrib find, a 230-million-year-old gas field, is part of a geological structure up to 30 times the size of the Kinsale Head find and is believed to be worth billions. Enterprise first came to Ireland in 1984, just one year after its formation by Britain's Margaret Thatcher. Twelve years later, in 1996, it began its first drilling operation in Ireland.

Enterprise Oil UK, along with Statoil and Marathon, the companies behind the development of the Mayo gas field, made the massive gas discovery - believed by industry sources to be the biggest find yet in European waters. It lies some 35 miles offshore. Following the award of the petroleum lease to the consortium by Marine Minister Frank Fahey, trade union leader Geraghty spoke out against the major concessions granted to Enterprise Energy Ireland and its partners in the Corrib field development. He was an angry man.

Blaming Burke

SIPTU National Offshore Committee spokesman, Padhraig Campbell, said: 'I think it would be a core demand of SIPTU that if it is in any way suspected that there was undue influence in the drastic changes to Ireland's oil and gas exploration terms from 1987 onwards, then the state should immediately freeze any existing licences and leases issued since then, including Corrib, in the national interest. The 1987 changes should be referred to the Flood Tribunal because they were so drastic, and they followed on from strongly unadvised meetings between Burke and the oil companies.' Ray Burke has already given evidence to the Flood Tribunal in relation to other issues.

According to an Irish rig-worker: 'Enterprise Oil refused point-blank to hire any Irish-based rig-workers on drilling rig. The Petrolia, owned by Maersk. They'd hired the rig to drill appraisal wells at this massive gas field. Despite the fact that there had been an agreed involvement of highly skilled and experienced Irish rig-workers on rigs operating in Irish waters since drilling began in 1969, there were no Irish rig-workers initially hired. Eventually, we managed to get about 26 jobs. In the 70s, we had about 80 jobs per rig, so it was down a lot, but we figured that that was as good as we'd get at that time - they [oil companies] were starting to cite EU law [free movement of labour within the EU] and other new equations. The excuse of pay was also used, but that wasn't the issue: the Brits were on higher pay; the Dutch and Norwegians were higher, too.' One rig-worker said: 'Irish rig-workers believe the real reason behind this is that it's an effort to remove the only people in Ireland who would know what the oil companies are really finding in Irish waters: guys with local educated knowledge. To add insult to injury, Enterprise Oil and Statoil want Bord Gais, at Irish taxpayers' expense, to build a gas pipeline from Mayo to Dublin via Galway, so they can sell the gas to the ESB for their new gas-fired power station. It doesn't end there. They also want an interconnector gas pipeline laid from Ireland to the UK, so they can export surplus Irish gas, owned by the oil companies, into Britain and then on to Europe - while Ireland will have to buy its domestic gas needs from the oil companies at the going rate. It seems too far-fetched to be believable that anyone, much less a government, would agree to such a deal.'

Following negotiations, a number of experienced Irish rig-workers got jobs on board the Petrolia drilling rig and were there when it hit a 'huge gas find - almost a blow-out', as one worker describes it. The pressure of the gas find was so high that it caused major 'technical difficulties' and drilling was abandoned until 1998. Eventually, almost two years later, the Sedco 711, owned by Sedco Forex, was contracted to drill and Enterprise agreed 34 jobs for Irish rig-workers. However, Enterprise refused to meet with Siptu and there followed a series of peaceful protests by Irish rig-workers. Enterprise then moved operations to Ayr on the west coast of Scotland, and outsourced the bulk of its goods and services requirements.

As for Ray Burke's rather generous terms, Enterprise Oil said they would have had little impact on Enterprise's decision to drill here. 'Exploration off Ireland had not been a great success, and it needed a regime to attract more exploration. Enterprise never came here [because of] a deal, but in the hope of making a discovery. But the amounts of discoveries to date hasn't been great.'

And on the subject of whether the terms of Irish licence agreements are more attractive than those of other countries, he said: 'I wouldn't have said so, because so many factors come into consideration in different countries. It would be like comparing apples and oranges. Every area has its own frameworks and parameters.'

The American Keyspan pipeline construction company recently offered to fund the development cost of a North-South interconnector, at no cost to Bord Gais, in order to pool all of the state's existing gas infrastructure with Keyspan. This allied with the privatisation of Bord Gais, ended any possibility of Irish involvement in the distribution of our own natural resources.

In another transaction described by experts as 'incredible', the government disposed of the Irish National Petroleum Corporation [INPC] at a time when its *raison d'être* was finally coming into force. The business and commercial assets of INPC, the state-owned oil company, were sold off in another disposal of the family silver to the American oil company Tosco, raising concern in the EU at the time. In the Dail, Socialist Party TD Joe Higgins opposed the deal, saying that the 'safety record of Tosco in the US [was] appalling'.

At the time of the sale, Tosco was in the process of being taken over by Phillips, the American oil multinational. The deal was clearly a good one for Tosco and Phillips, who now have not alone the product, but the markets and distribution facilities within Ireland. Fergus Cahill of Phillips was a former head of INPC many years ago. When INPC was brought to the market, Tosco made a successful bid for it.

In a sale which appeared to net the state €126m, the real gain is another matter. The state agreed to write off over €101m in debts, believed to have been incurred in the refurbishment of INPC just prior to the sale. In terms of guarantees, INPC gave an undertaking that it will underwrite any claims for environmental damage or pollution up to €95m, and provide an open-ended guarantee in regard to any claims in respect of the Whiddy Island incident, where the oil tanker *Betelgeuse* exploded some years ago. These guarantees and undertakings could potentially not alone wipe out any perceived gains, but leave the state in a negative-equity position.

Noel Tracey TD, FF Minister for Science, Technology and Commerce, told the annual dinner of the Institute of Petroleum in 2001: 'The Tosco transaction represents an excellent deal for Ireland. It radically improves the situation for both the refinery and the terminal by placing them squarely within the fold of a major integrated oil business, where opportunities for profitable trading are maximised and a culture of investment in both plant and people predominates.'

Joe Higgins, though, condemned the sale of INPC in the Dail, saying that it was 'a policy which has been dictated not by the interests of working or ordinary people, but by the interests of multinational corporations exerting huge pressure on governments.'

Industry experts say that INPC, which dealt with the retail end of the business, was well placed to win contracts from organisations such as the ESB, Iarnród Éireann and other state agencies for the supply of fuel, and at the time of the sale already had a substantial turnover.

For its part, Enterprise Energy Ireland claims that the capital cost of bringing Corrib gas ashore will be in the region of €634m between 2000 and 2005, with estimated additional costs of €152m to connect up to the main Galway ring later this year. While much of this will represent outlay in respect of equipment - which can be off-set against taxation - it states that there will be 'a significant number of workers involved, around 500 for two seasons on the off-shore pipeline and terminal, and 1,000 for one season on the pipeline to Galway.'

In an October 1998 report on the Corrib North region, international consultants Wood McKenzie, independent oil and gas assessors within Natvest's Markets, Corporate and Investment Division, indicated that the find could yield between five and seven trillion cubic feet [TCF] of gas. Current estimates for the immediate Corrib area is around one TCF, with a monetary value of almost €3bn. If the area does yield seven TCF, then the find could be worth in excess of €21bn, and this, with write-offs and tax breaks, a no-royalties deal and no state cut, means Enterprise Energy Ireland can make massive profits for its stated capital costs of €634m, plus ancillary costs.

Shell Oil – Global polluter

Royal Dutch Shell today is among the richest and best-positioned corporations on earth. They do business in more than 140 countries, deal with 25 million customers daily, and have gross revenues in excess of \$175 billion a year.

Shell's 2004 profits were \$18 billion. More than 80 percent of Shell's revenue comes from oil and gas in one form or another, with more than 60 percent of that made in Europe and the US. But major markets for Shell are building in other regions too.

Market share/importance

Shell Oil Products Division runs the "downstream" refining and gasoline retailing empires with interests in 50 refineries and 56,000 gas stations globally. Shell Trading is also a major global player in energy and chemicals trading, doing on average about 11 million barrels of crude-oil-equivalent trading per day in 2001.

Shell USA

In the US, for example, Shell will soon be the single largest gasoline chain in the country, having gained more than 13,000 new locations as a result of Texaco stations acquired in the ChevronTexaco divestiture. Shell will spend \$500 million to "rebrand" the Texaco stations. When the dust clears, Shell will hold 14.4 percent of the US gasoline market, ahead of ExxonMobil and BPAmoco.

Global Shell

Globally, Shell's oil and gas exploration arm, operating in more than 40 countries and with its own dedicated work force of 15,000. In 2001, Shell oil and/or gas discoveries were made in Australia, Oman, Egypt, Brazil, the Netherlands, Brunei, and Malaysia. In offshore Philippines, the Malampaya deepwater gas field is the largest single foreign investment ever made in that country.

Shell is one of the world's big 7 oil companies:

- Shell's Crude oil production in 2000 stood at 2,274 thousand barrels per-day
- Shell's Natural gas production available for sale at 8,212 million standard-cubic-feet per-day
- Shell's oil product sales at 5,574 thousand barrels per-day

For comparison:

- Exxon-Mobil's liquids production in 2000 stood at 2,600 thousand barrels per-day
- Exxon-Mobil's natural gas production available for sale at 10,300 million cubic-feet per-day
- Exxon-Mobil's petroleum product sales at 8,000 thousand barrels per-day

Greenwash

Over recent years Shell has successfully come to be seen as one of the more progressive companies within its sector. In the face of current public hostility towards Esso (See: www.stopesso.com), Shell is making renewed efforts to differentiate itself from the dirty dog of the industry. A series of newspaper adverts portray Shell as a caring, listening company, for example with its community-aware "Flares out in 2008" program in Nigeria. This public face ignores the group's ambitious targets for increased production of fossil fuels. Shell has further greened its image by being seen to talk with NGOs (Non-Governmental Organisations) most notably and most controversially Amnesty International. Shell portrays itself as a good corporate citizen, but like all multinationals and all oil companies Royal-Dutch/Shell continues, behind the greenwash, with many of its old ways.

Climate Change

As part of efforts to brand itself as a forward-looking new-energy company, Shell has begun to invest in off-shore wind energy. Shell, however has not translated this concern into action, it has not ceased or scaled back its exploration and production activities. Quite the opposite, Shell has ambitious plans to increase extraction by 5 per-cent year on year. So far the company is on target: "Compared to the third quarter last year, total hydrocarbon production increased by 5 per-cent (2001)".

Nigeria

Despite being Africa's biggest producer of oil, Nigeria's people are still among the poorest in the continent. In the early 1990s the oil-rich Niger delta became the scene of violent confrontations between the local ethnic minorities and the Nigerian security forces who had orders to protect the oil installations.

The protestors accused Shell of damaging their environment and their culture. In 1993 the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People, led by writer Ken Saro-Wiwa, mobilised tens of thousands of people against Shell. The pressure was enough to force the world's leading oil company to stop production. To get the oil — and the profits — flowing again, General Sani Abacha's government unleashed a murderous repression. Hundreds of Ogoni were arrested, imprisoned and sometimes summarily executed. Two years later Saro-Wiwa and eight Ogoni activists were executed. The company has admitted that it had paid the Nigerian security forces directly.

Brent Spar

In April 1995 Greenpeace activists occupied the Shell's Brent Spar oil platform which had come to the end of its working life and was due to be dumped at sea.

The platform contained tonnes of toxic drilling muds, plus oil residues and radioactive waste. Shell's cosy relationship with the UK Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) ensured that it got approval for the dumping — indeed the DTI refused to accept written protests from Greenpeace. Shell said it had submitted an objective view from "independent" scientists but a number of reports are alleged to have been hidden or destroyed. One of these predicted that the Spar would break up on its way down to its intended resting place 150m below the surface, dispelling its waste into the water column.

After a three year campaign by Greenpeace the Brent Spar was, in November 1998, broken up and incorporated into a new ferry terminal in the harbour of Mekjarvik, Norway. Since this decision, European countries surrounding the North Sea have invoked a moratorium on such dumping of platforms, avoiding a dangerous precedent for the misuse of our seas.

To see how little Shell has changed you can look at some of the lobbying organisations Shell is part off. Royal Dutch/Shell group and its subsidiaries have substantial access to government, particularly in the UK and the Netherlands, through these organisations.

Global Climate Coalition

Shell was formerly a member of the Global Climate Coalition (GCC): The coalition heavily lobbied governments and mounted persuasive advertising campaigns in the US to turn public opinion against concrete action on greenhouse gas emissions. The so called 'carbon club' led the way in undermining public support for action to curb climate change. In 1998 Shell followed BP and left the GCC. By early 2000 Texaco and others were joining the movement away from the GCC. While the GCC was an overt lobby against action on climate change, since it was sidelined, other lobby groups have come to the fore which are more subtle in their tactics.

The European Roundtable of Industrialists

The European Roundtable of Industrialists (ERT), which includes Phil Watts of 'Shell Transport and Trading' is a club of 48 captains of industry, drawn from the largest European multinationals. With privileged access to EU and national decision-makers the roundtable has been at the forefront in promoting industry self-regulation over government-enforceable mechanisms. They were a key group pushing for neo-liberal clauses in the EU constitution.

Centre for European Policy Studies

Shell also holds a position within the Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS) (www.ceps.be) which hosted a special meeting on climate change, on the eve of COP6 bis, the resumed international negotiations on the future of the Kyoto Protocol (Bonn, July 16-27, 2000). The meeting launched a new CEPS working party on "Emissions trading and the new EU climate-change policy" which will be chaired by Charles Nicholson of fellow oil giant BP.

International Chamber of Commerce and US Council for International Business

From its website, the ICC heralds itself as "The only representative body that speaks with authority on behalf of enterprises from all sectors in every part of the world." The council was founded in 1945 "to promote an open system of world trade, investment and finance". ICC aims to be a forum where business can agree voluntary rules to govern world trade in the hope that this image of responsible industry self-regulation will persuade governments not to interfere. It proved so successful in this that within a year of the creation of the United Nations, ICC was granted consultative status at the UN.

European Chemical Industry Council

The company is a member of the European Chemical Industry Council who brand themselves as "both the forum and the voice of the European chemical industry." CEFIC represents, directly or indirectly, about 40,000 chemical companies in Europe, companies which account for more than 30 per-cent of world chemicals production. The federation's offices are in Brussels, where CEFIC was incorporated in 1972 as "an international association with scientific objectives". CEFICs supports TRIPs which will bring patent laws into new areas, allowing the patenting of natural resources as if they were new ideas.

'Taking back what's ours' – The struggle to re-nationalise the Gas in Bolivia

Recent months have seen revolutionary upheavals in Bolivia over the issue of the government handing over Bolivia's natural gas to multinationals. This is exactly what is happening in Ireland. The struggles in Bolivia over water and gas privatization shows how mass movements of ordinary people can force back the multinationals and take back national resources like gas and water for everyone.

In June 2005 after a three week general strike and the blockading of cities, particularly the capital La Paz by workers and indigenous people, Bolivia's President, Carlos Mesa, was forced to resign.

Water and sewerage services were previously privatised and the government was busily selling off recently discovered abundant reserves of gas to multi-nationals. Recent years has seen mass resistance to water privatization in Cochabamba, a region in Bolivia. Workers, indigenous and poor peasants had thrown up social movements fighting for their rights. But the resignation of the President Mesa did not solve the crisis. Immediately the head of the Senate, wealthy landowner Hernando Vaca Díez attempted to step into the presidency with the backing of parliament.

Mass civil dis-obedience was key to bringing down the government

A mass movement of blockades swept the country. Indigenous peasant road blockades jumped from 61 on June 6 to 90 on June 7, to 106 on June 8, reaching a high point at 119 on June 9. Seven gas fields property of Repsol YPF (Chaco) and British Petroleum (Andino) were taken over by the Assembly of the Gurani People and indigenous frontier settlers, while highland peasants shut off the valves at stations in Sayari (Cochabamba) and Sica Sica (La Paz).

According to the head of what remained of the state-owned hydrocarbon enterprise, YPFB, takeovers at Los Penocos, Sirari, Vibora and Yapacani on June 6-7 reduced the provision of petroleum by more than 3,000 barrels per day. The stock of Repsol, a consortium of Spanish, Argentine, and US capital with fixed assets of \$1.2 billion, plus 2,000 square km of territory under exploitation, and 10,000 under exploration, dropped by 1.4%. Production of cement and beer two of Bolivia's only remaining national industries was also brought to a halt because of blockades and takeovers.

On June 9 Indigenous peasant trade unionists and miners from around the country blockaded the parliamentary session and prevented the installation of the new President Díaz. Later in the evening Díez bitterly withdrew in favour of Eduardo Rodríguez, President of the Supreme Court. Díez move was no doubt prompted by the head of the armed forces Admiral Luis Aranda, who sensing the movement was too strong to be put down easily, commented "society is demanding profound transformation".

The same day in El Alto, home to half a million poor high above the capital La Paz, the movements proposed a revolutionary manifesto. This radical-popular bloc made up of the miners union (FSTMB), regional trade union central (COR), neighbourhood association federation (FEJUVE), the indigenous peasant union (CSUTCB-Túpac Katari), the national trade union central headquartered in La Paz (COB) established a five-point program.

In a mass assembly held in the offices of the FEJUVE, it was decided:

- 1.) That El Alto was to be the general barracks of the Bolivian revolution of the 21 century
- 2.) To form an Indigenous Popular Assembly as an instrument of national power led by the above-mentioned organizations
- 3.) To form self-provisioning, self-defence, media, and political commissions
- 4.) To keep up incessant struggle for the nationalisation and industrialisation of gas
- 5.) To form Popular Assemblies at the departmental level under the direction of the Regional Workers Centrals (COR)
- 6.) To reject parliamentary elections or any constitutional succession

The struggle to re-nationalise the gas in Bolivia continues. The experience of successfully re-nationalising Bolivia's water shows it is possible. We need to do the same here in Ireland. But the movement needs to

escalate to mass civil disobedience at Shell and Statoil depots and bring the struggle to a political crisis for the government.

The real cost of the oil industry Wrecking lives and destroying the planet

George Bush at the G8 announced his alternative to the Kyoto Protocols on Global Warming. Bush, a former oil boss, argued his plan will "light the way to a brighter future" for the United States. One commentator said of Bush's plan, "It looks like an Exxon Mobil annual report, and maybe that's what it is."

Drilling for oil and gas will be encouraged in the Alaskan wilderness and the Bush Administration will open up other designated federal land for exploration and lift environmental requirements.

Yet again the oil conglomerates are calling the shots. The oil industry is enormous, but it is also rotten to the core. It is destroying lives across the planet and is even putting the planet itself at risk.

Global warming

Global warming is already affecting the climate and its effects are set to worsen dramatically.

Severe drought in already dry areas will lead to lower agricultural production which in turn will increase the likelihood of famines; A rise in sea levels will cause floods threatening infrastructure on coastlines. The threat posed by forest fires will increase dramatically. The spread of serious infectious diseases and parasites, particularly those carried or caused by low quality water supplies, will also increase. While our environment is at the mercy of the capitalist market carbon emissions will continue unabated.

The culprits are the fossil fuel industry and the biggest criminals of them all are the oil companies.

Scientists have warned that carbon emissions must be cut by at least 80 percent by 2050 if we are to begin to address the damage done to the earth.

But western governments have even refused to implement the more modest targets agreed by the international Kyoto summit in 1997. The US, under pressure from big business, has pulled out of even that. The US is responsible for one quarter of all carbon emissions even though it only has 4 percent of the world's population. George W Bush has said, "I'm not going to let the United States carry the burden for cleaning up the world's air, like the Kyoto treaty would have done." The US government claims that any reductions in pollution would put it at an economic disadvantage to those countries without such controls.

But greater investment in alternative energy production through wind, wave and solar power would create real alternatives to burning fossil fuel. Rather than fund such pollution-free alternatives, some governments actually want nuclear energy and large hydroelectric dams to be classified as "alternative" or clean energies! As for the oil companies, BP has adopted a new "green" image, yet it spent more on the new logo last year than it did on renewable energy in 1998.

The drive to war

The importance of oil to the world economy will mean more wars. The Middle East was carved up at the beginning of the century by the imperial powers at the demand of the oil industry. Oil interests have cost millions of lives. Defending the Oil companies meant three gulf wars. US intervention in the politics of Middle East aims to shore up oil interests. The presence of the oil giants ensures that the Middle East will remain wracked with war as long as the West wants the control of oil.

Unless forced, big business will continue to demand the right to make money unfettered by controls regardless of the consequences. It is up to us to build a movement strong enough to challenge those priorities.

The record of human history is that those who control societies have often been prepared see the whole of society plunge into disastrous chaos and collapse rather than accept change which undermined their power. There is no reason to suppose the most powerful ruling class in human history, those who today head the giant global corporations at whose centre stand the fossil fuel corporations, will behave any differently to their predecessors whose societies' fate is witnessed only by ruined monuments.

A surer path to change is needed. A strategy to win real action on climate change starts with maintaining and intensifying popular mobilisation and pressure. The international day of protests called for 3 December this year provides an important focus for all this. We have to mobilise as widely as possible for protest and action. But we also have to see that the fight to halt climate change also has an inherent logic that goes beyond mere reforms within the existing structures of economic and political power.

In short, the struggle over climate change raises the question of wresting power and wealth out of the hands of those who have it now. It points to the desperate need for a society run in a fundamentally different and democratic way, one in which not profit but the needs of ordinary people and the future of the planet we live on are at the heart of all action and policy. We in the Socialist Workers Party want to see such a transformation. As in Bolivia getting democratic control over our national resources, and the resources of the planet will require revolutionary change. We need a world where people come before profits, where people power comes before corporate power – a socialist world.

People and planet before profit- Time for a new left

The Shell to Sea campaign is a fantastic example of the new movements of resistance against corporate greed that are emerging across the world.

In Latin America corrupt governments who have sold off resources to the US and attacked the living conditions of the poor and workers have been overthrown by mass movements from Bolivia to Argentina. The anti-capitalist movement that began with the shutting down of the World Trade Organisation meetings by protestors and included mass demonstrations against the G8 in Genoa and Edinburgh has at its heart the message that people and planet should come before profit.

Our planet and the conditions of workers, the unemployed and poor is under attack from Governments implementing neoliberal policies. These policies put the profit needs and interests of private corporations before the needs of people and the environment. They spread the free market and corruption into every sector of society through selling off public resources, privatisation, deregulation, attacking worker's conditions and unions, increased arms spending, dismantling the welfare state and the rise of the corporate welfare state.

Neoliberalism in Ireland is the free-market Celtic Tiger which has created massive wealth for an elite minority but created poorer public services and an increasing cost of living for the majority driving up the gap between rich and poor and rates of poverty. This neoliberalism and the cosy relationships between the wealthy and politicians has involved disgusting levels of corruption and abuse of power amongst the establishment from the Church to politicians to the Gardai.

Thatcher said there was no alternative to this free market and all the destruction and corruption it brings with it. But the people resisting the sell-off of their resources and services in Bolivia and Mayo, the Dublin Bus drivers resisting privatisation or the McBreartys fighting corruption in Donegal do not accept that this is the way things have to be. They are right. Contrary to Thatchers' viewpoint there is an alternative and people are fighting for it. That alternative is a world where resources would be produced and organised according to the needs of ordinary people, where public services like health, education and transport would be funded properly by taxing the rich, where we would not fund or support war, where real democracy exists so that power is in the hands of the people and not corruptible politicians, Garda or Judges. That world is not free market capitalism it is a different democratic, socialist system.

New left alliance

In order to achieve these goals the protest movements and the left in Ireland needs to unite to create a new left alliance that will both stand in the elections on the principles of people and planet before

profit and struggle on the ground against neoliberalism.

The Labour party have hitched themselves to FG in order to form an 'alternative government' for the next election. They are breathing new life into FG and many people are enraged with their failure to develop left opposition and policies.

The Labour Party has not been in power recently but when it was in power in May 1997 it implemented the 12.5% corporation tax rate making Ireland the haven for profit making for big multinationals.

The Greens are to a large degree tailing labour strategy which is to form a rainbow government with FG at the next election.

While The IRA decision to end the 'war' means that now Sinn Fein can be seen (once they get past one or two other grooming for government tasks such as policing) as a prospective coalition partner in the south. Indeed they ensured that coalition with FF was not ruled out at their recent ard fheis. When Sinn Fein were in government in Northern Ireland, Martin McGuinness (Education) and Barbara De Brún (Health) implemented privatisation policies.

Their nationalist politics means that they are prepared to compromise with ruling class and right wing politicians in order to develop their goal of 'national unity' e.g. power share with DUP – or UUP and implement privatisation in the north, and power-share with FF and implement privatisation in the south.

Our Vision

It was an alliance of the radical Left parties in France that won a majority of votes to defeat the neoliberal EU constitution in France. In an exciting breakthrough in Germany a new radical left party, the Left Party, is winning 10-15% support in polls, mainly from former members and supporters of the German labour party, the SPD.

In Britain it was the newly formed Respect alliance and George Galloway that most vocally opposed Bush and Blair's war. From Bolivia to France it is the new Left movements that provide a real opposition. In Ireland the movements need to create a new left alliance (on a local and national level) similar to such new alliances emerging across the world like Respect in the UK and Left Block in Portugal.

The Socialist Workers Party is actively campaigning for such a new left. If you are interested in this project please contact us, get involved in the resistance – Another World is Possible

Join the Socialists

Name: _____

Address: _____

E Mail: _____

Phone: _____

☐ I want to join the Socialist Workers Party

☐ I want more information about the Socialist Workers Party

☐ I want to receive Socialist Worker regularly